

In the Claims:

Please amend the claims to read as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A process for bonding an array of pile loops stitched onto a surface of a backing, each pile loop having a root portion that is held to the surface of a backing by a stitching thread, the process comprising the steps of :

prior to formation of the pile loops, applying a thermoplastic binder material having a predetermined melting point to the backing in the vicinity of the root portion of the loops ;

mechanically flexing the backing with the loops thereon into and out of the plane of the backing at a temperature greater than the melting point of the binder,

thereby to cause the binder material to melt and to flow and concentrate in the root portion of the pile loops, in the vicinity of the stitching thread underlaps holding the root portion to the backing, and near the surface of the backing adjacent to the root portions.

2. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the thermoplastic binder material is applied to the surface of the backing.

3. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the temperature is maintained by immersing the backing with the pile loops thereon in a liquid having a temperature greater than the melting point of the binder.

4. (Original) The process of claim 3 further comprising the step:

after immersion in the liquid, drying the backing.

5. (Original) The process of claim 4 wherein the backing is dried at a temperature of at least one hundred ten degrees Centigrade (110 °C) for at least 2 minutes.

6. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the temperature is maintained by passing steam over the backing with the pile loops thereon.

7. (Original) The process of claim 1 further comprising the step:

after passing steam over the backing, drying the backing.

8. (Original) The process of claim 7 wherein the backing is dried at a temperature of at least one hundred ten degrees Centigrade (110 °C) for at least 2 minutes.

9. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the temperature is maintained by passing over the backing a heated gas having a temperature greater than the melting point of the binder.

10. (Original) The process of claim 1 further comprising the step:

prior to mechanically flexing the backing, scouring the pile loops to remove substantially all oil and finish therefrom.

11. (Original) The process of claim 6 further comprising the step:

prior to mechanically flexing the backing, scouring the pile loops to remove substantially all oil and finish therefrom.

12. (Original) The process of claim 9 further comprising the step:

prior to mechanically flexing the backing, scouring the pile loops to remove substantially all oil and finish therefrom.

13. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 2 wherein the thermoplastic binder is an amorphous binder in the form of a powder having particle sizes in the range of one (1) to five hundred (500) microns, the powder binder having a melting point in the range from ~~about~~ eighty-five (85) to ~~about~~ one hundred degrees Centigrade (100 °C).

14. Cancelled

15. Cancelled

16. (Original) The process of claim 13 wherein the powder binder is applied to the backing in the form of a slurry comprising the binder powder dispersed in a liquid vehicle,

wherein the process further comprises the step of:

after application of the binder slurry, heating the surface of the backing to a temperature greater than the melting point of the powder binder thereby to melt the powder binder to attach the same to the surface of the backing.

17. Cancelled
18. Cancelled
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20. Cancelled
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23. Cancelled
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25. Cancelled
26. Cancelled
27. Cancelled